

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

## SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE: 14 SEPTEMBER 2000

### REPORT ON FOSTER CARE SERVICES

#### Report by the Director of Educational & Social Services

#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise of the work being undertaken by the Foster Care Service, and to seek agreement to proposals to expand the Foster Care Service within current resources.

#### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Foster Care Service is managed by the Service Officer Adoption and Fostering. There are currently 2 Family Placement Supervisors in post and a third Family Placement Supervisor's vacancy has been filled recently. The Foster Care Service has 35 active caring families.
- 2.2 The Foster Care Service has expanded significantly since the inception of East Ayrshire Council in 1996.
- 2.3 Since 1996 we have approved 18 new caring families and re-approved 7 existing caring families to care for more difficult and challenging children. All of these families have been prepared and trained within the criteria set by the UK National Standards in Foster Care, the COSLA Foster Care Guidelines 2000 and the Council's Foster Care Procedures. Once the third Family Placement Supervisor is in post, all of these families will be supervised to the required standard.

#### **3 CURRENT POSITION**

- 3.1 Our interim audit of need highlights that to meet current placement demand within National Standards and COSLA Foster Care Guidelines the Council requires to recruit a further eight flexible caring families.
- 3.2 The Council currently has five children cared for in independent specialist foster care schemes outwith the Council's area because the current infrastructure within the Council has not allowed greater development of in-house resources. In addition the Council is currently caring for five young people in residential care for whom the preferred option would be a family placement.
- 3.3 The average cost to the Council of each external placement is £45,350 p.a. The Council's own scheme is proving very successful and is capable of expansion, as there are families available within our communities able to offer this service. The approximate cost to the Council of our in-house provision, including staff costs is approximately £14,768 per placement.

#### **4 INTERIM PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 Committee is asked at this stage to consider approving the creation of a fourth Family Placement Supervisor post, at the Qualified Social Worker Grade (£17,322 - £22,080 plus 7.5% unsocial hours allowance), to facilitate the further development and expansion of the Foster Care Service to meet the current need for family placements. Also a post of clerical assistant (Grade GS1/2 £8,652 - £11,685) at 17.5 hours is required to provide clerical and administrative support.

4.2 The proposals set out within this report have been discussed and agreed with the Trade Unions.

## **5. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The creation of a fourth Family Placement Supervisors post would ensure that the council is equipped to recruit, assess and supervise new caring families to the appropriate standard, as required by the Children (Scotland) Act, Regulations and Guidance 1995 and the UK National Standards in Foster Care. It ensures children are retained within their own community and supports the Council's policy of supporting people in homely environments in preference to residential care

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Expenditure on this additional post would enable the council to secure appropriate care for accommodated children within its own resources in preference to having recourse to external resources which are significantly more expensive. This can be done from within the current budget available to social work through a virement of resources of £34,307 from the Childrens Service Employee Development Costs budget. Under Section 5.3 of the Council's Financial Regulations, this virement requires to be approved by the Social Work Committee.

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:

- (i) agree the expansion of the Foster Care Service to allow the Council to recruit additional caring families;
- (ii) refer the staffing proposals to the Personnel & Property Sub Committee for further consideration and approval;
- (iii) agree the virement of resources noted in Section 6 of the report and instruct the Director of Finance to effect this transfer; and
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of the report.

BD/DB/LM

ENC (0)

26 September 2000

**John Mulgrew**

**Director of Educational & Social Services**

### **List of Background Papers**

Children (Scotland) Act Regulations and Guidance 1995

U.K. National Standards in Foster Care June 1999

COSLA Foster Care Document May 2000

**AGENDA**

For further information please contact Eileen McConville-Clark, Service Officer Adoption and Fostering on 01563 576913